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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2008

In Today's Papers

Erdogan's Iran Remarks Create Controversy

Media outlets over the weekend and today carried Prime Minister Erdogan's address to the Brookings Institution in Washington, in which the PM made some controversial remarks on Iran. In response to a question about Iran's nuclear aspirations, Erdogan said "The countries who are working to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran should also not own nuclear weapons." Erdogan added, "The use of nuclear energy for the production of nuclear weapons is unacceptable," and he stressed that Turkey continued "to warn" Iran on this matter. In, "Erdogan Puts up a Nuclear Shield over Iran," liberal Radikal reported on Sunday that Erdogan defended Iran. Mainstream Milliyet says Erdogan's remarks are in direct opposition to Turkey's official disarmament policy because up to this point, Turkey has viewed a nuclear-armed U.S. as a necessity for the security of Turkey and its NATO allies. Retired ambassadors reacted to the PM's remarks in Sunday's Milliyet. Retired ambassador Umit Pamir said, "If Erdogan was referring to the U.S. when he called on those who oppose Iran's nuclear program to disarm, then his statement contradicts NATO's defense doctrine." Retired ambassador Ilter Turkmen asked in Milliyet, "Where did this feeling of solidarity with Iran come from? Do we see Iran as a responsible state?"

Editorial Commentary on Erdogan on Iran

Tamer Korkmaz wrote in Islamist oriented Yeni Safak: "Whenever PM Erdogan tries to address the nuclear weapons crisis in a comprehensive manner by emphasizing that 'Iran as well as others should have no nuclear weapons,' he gets criticized by some for deviating from the American and NATO line. Why should improvements in ties between Turkey and Iran negatively affect Turkish-American relations? Let's not forget that when former U.S. President Jimmy Carter spoke with Hamas leaders, he was criticized both by Israelis and Americans. However, it was also Jimmy Carter who had the courage to say that Israel has 150 nuclear weapons. But, some of our former diplomats and commentators like to take a double standard regarding nuclear capabilities. In their world, it's okay if Israel has WMD, but even the possibility of Iran having WMD is

unacceptable."

Semih Idiz wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "In order to 'form a bridge' between Turkey and the incoming Obama Administration, PM Erdogan decided to speak at the Brookings Institute, which is considered to be the ivory tower of the Democrats. However, in his remarks regarding Iran's nuclear program, Erdogan made a big gaffe to anger the U.S. Unfortunately, his remarks upset the U.S. and all of Turkey's NATO allies. Erdogan's foreign policy advisers should remind him that it takes a long time to mend the damage from tactless remarks. On the eve of a new era with the new administration in the U.S., Turkey should be careful to consider our mutual interests through diplomatic dialogue."

Okay Gonensin wrote in mainstream Vatan: "During his visit to the U.S., PM Erdogan made a political gaffe by saying 'The countries who are working to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran should also not own nuclear weapons.'" Turkey's PM can use such logic only if he is unaware of the efforts exerted globally regarding nuclear non-proliferation. Obviously, PM Erdogan did not consider the impact these words would have on Turkey's NATO allies. Moreover, Iran's nuclear power is a huge threat for us, our region and the entire world. PM Erdogan's defense of Iran indicates that he can make big mistakes in foreign policy, which is an issue of grave concern."

Mustafa Balbay wrote in leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet: "In its essence, the PM's statement on Iran is right. The U.S. follows a policy of allowing the countries that it favors to have nuclear weapons, but not allowing them in other countries that it does not

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hold favorable. And Erdogan rejects this. If this is our official policy, then our job should not be mediating between Iran and the U.S."

Kadri Gursel in mass appeal Milliyet (11/16): "PM Erdogan's remarks contradict to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty signed by Turkey, as well as to the national interests of Turkey as a member of the Western alliance. A nuclear Iran would pose a big threat for Turkey. The messages issued by Erdogan at the Brookings Institution known for its close ties with the Democrat Party must have aroused serious suspicions. The PM has shown that he is not impartial, and this has harmed his ability to act as go-between in the nuclear controversy between the U.S. and Iran."

Germany's Obama: Cem Ozdemir

Media outlets hail the success story of the new German Green Party leader Cem Ozdemir who was elected co-chairman of the party on Saturday. Reports are featured on the front pages of Sunday's papers and some continue into Monday papers by emphasizing Cem Ozdemir is the first ethnic Turk to be selected as a leader of a political party in Germany. Ozdemir's rise within the Green Party is compared to Barack Obama's rise in the Democratic Party. Mainstream Hurriyet asked on Sunday in its banner headline, "Is Cem the Obama of Germany?" while Islamist oriented Yeni Safak headlined with, "The First Turkish Leader in Germany." Islamist oriented Zaman played off of Obama's campaign slogan by inserting Ozdemir's first name, "Yes We Cem." Mainstream Aksam called Ozdemir, "Germany's Turkish Obama."

Turkey-Iran Natural Gas Deal

Islamist oriented Yeni Safak reports that negotiations continue between Turkey and Iran in order to increase level of natural gas flow. Turkish Energy Minister Guler is leading a Turkish delegation to Iran today and negotiations will continue with his Iranian counterpart Oil Minister Gulam Nozari. Based on earlier statements made by the two ministers, Yeni Safak reports that Ankara "hopes to conclude a Memorandum of Understanding with Iran and get more natural gas from this country."

Turkish Media Criticize G20 Summit

Media outlets are not impressed with the outcome of the G20 summit - namely due to the lack of a decisive action plan. Reports of \$500 bottles of wine that were served at the summit fueled criticism of the G20 leaders' ability to deliver relief to those who are

suffering from the effects of this crisis. Mainstream Hurriyet carries the headline, "Criticism is Directed at the \$53.6 Trillion Summit - Where Are the Concrete Steps?" Hurriyet reports, "The 20 countries that comprise 86% of the world's economy have, altogether, infused their economies with \$53.6 trillion in order to curb the financial crisis." However, the paper also points out, "Talks will continue," but notes, "There is no concrete plan." Mainstream Sabah reports, "The G20 decide to tighten their belts" regarding public expenditures in order to "support economic growth."

Huseyin Bas of leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet writes in "From One Summit to Another," that "while we wait on the next summit (in April 2009), the recession will not stop, and the effects from rising rates of unemployment will be felt in our daily lives." Islamist-oriented Zaman reports, "We Must Get Off of the Donkey before We Ride the Horse," referring to the need of the G20 leaders, including "the U.S. with its large public expenditures on military initiatives," to be unified in efforts to redirect their priorities towards encouragement of economic growth (i.e. the horse) instead of towards public expenditures (i.e. the donkey). Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports, "The G20 leaders talked to Bush, but they did not make any promises."

Cartoon from today's leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet depicting Uncle Sam forcing a sweating Atlas to hold up the world.

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The U.S. Sets a Date (Ortadoğu)

Media outlets report on the Iraqi Cabinet's approval of a Status of Forces agreement with the U.S. - focus is on the timeline for withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq. Mainstream Milliyet reports in a banner front-page headline, "The U.S. Will Withdraw in 2011." Mainstream Hurriyet carries the front-page feature headline, "This is How This Era Will End," as "the Baghdad government approves a timetable for the withdrawal of 152,000 U.S. troops from Iraq." Mainstream Sabah reports, "Baghdad and the U.S. Finally Reconcile Their Differences." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet carries the headline, "The U.S. Will Stay in Iraq for Three More Years." Islamist-oriented Zaman reports on its front page, "The U.S. will stay in Iraq until 2012." Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports, in "The U.S. will stay in Iraq for Three More Years," that, "the agreement is final and cannot be changed," which "poses a challenge to President-elect Barack Obama's promises to withdraw by the end of 2009." Far-right Ortadoğu reports, "Here is the day the U.S. has set to withdraw completely from Iraq - November 15, 2011," and notes, "The White House was pleased to hear of the Iraqi Cabinet's decision," as "from March 20, 2003 until now, talks have finally come to an end regarding when U.S. troops will leave Iraq."

Editorial Commentary on Iraq

Fatih Cikirge argued in mainstream Hurriyet: "There are some important issues to be considered prior to the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. What is going to happen if the north falls under full control of the Peshmerge forces? What if the Peshmerge forces refuse to become part of national army? What are the security arrangements going to be in Musul and Kirkuk? And, most important of all, will the U.S. establish a military base in northern Iraq? Unless those issues are addressed, Turkey faces continued security threats from northern Iraq. Turkey must make sure to pursue full contact and direct engagement in Iraq before it is too late."

TV News: CNN Turk

Domestic News

- At the end of November, AKP officials will hold a two-day meeting in Kizilcahamam to discuss preparations for the forthcoming municipality elections and the problems facing the Kurds and the Alevis.

- On Monday, Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders Christofias and Talat will come together for talks.

- IMF Managing Director Dominique Strauss-Kahn said Turkey and the IMF should reach an agreement on a finance package in the near future.

International News

- Iraq endorses a security agreement with the U.S. that would allow an American military presence in the country until 2011.
- Afghan President Hamid Karzai offers to protect Taliban's fugitive leader Mullah Mohammad Omar in exchange for peace.
- Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert orders the army to speed up plans for wide-scale operations against rocket attacks from Gaza.

WILSON